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in two weeks. Usually it elicits a lively interest in the class, and many bright and subtle thoughts scintillate around the well-sustained war of opinions. In order to a suitable preparation for the debate, the professor indicates the authorities on each side and gives hints as to the principal points. Among our most interesting questions are such as the following: "Is Philosophy the Most Useful of Studies?" Affirmative: Morell's Hist. Spec. Phil. Sec. 2; Porter's Human Intellect § 9-15. Negative: Lewes' History Introd. and p. 769 (Appleton's ed.) "Have we a Knowledge of the Infinite?" Aff., Porter's Elements, p. 550 to end, Calderwood's Philosophy of the Infinite, chap. 3, also pp. 379-387, 397-406, 428-436, McCosh's Intuitions, 186-201, note pp. 194, 195, Mill's Exam. I., p. 61-68, 102-124, Am. ed. Negative: Hamilton's Discussions, Mansell's Limits, lect. 2, 3, 4. "Is sight or touch the more important, in gaining a knowledge of the external world?" Affirmative: Hamilton's Reid, note E, p. 917, Helmholtz' Popular Scientific Lectures, p. 270, Am. ed., Locke's Essay, 2, 9-9. Negative: Porter's Elements, pp. 120-126, 154-164, Stewart's Elem., Vol. 1, 5, 2, §1, Thos. Brown, Lect. 29, Bain's Sense and Intellect, p. 366-373. "Is all Human Knowledge derived from Experience?" Affirmative: Mill's Exam., Vol. I., p. 80, 181-189, 307-321, Bain's Mental Science, p. 181, Appendix, p. 33, Ribot's English Psychology, pp. 100-104, 170, Lewes on Hume, Hist., p. 577, Mill's Logic, II., ch. 5-6, Locke's Essay and Exam. of Malebranche. Negative: McCosh's Intuitions, pp. 20, 280; Defense of Fundamental Truth, p. 251; Hamilton's Reid, 749-754; Amer. Presb. Quar. Rev., July, 1868, Jan., 1866; April and July, 1869; Mansell's Metaph., 66, 248; Battle of the two Philosophies. See Littell's Living Age, 4th Series, Vol. 15, p. 451.

A small optional class in the original of *Plato's Phædo* is always secured toward the end of senior year, which is conducted by the Professor of Intellectual Philosophy.

J. W. M.

CLINTON, N. Y.

BOOK NOTICES.

Table Talk. By A. Bronson Alcott. Boston: Roberts Brothers. 1877.

In the first part, or "Book I." we have under the head of "Practical," a series of eight chapters in which the paragraphs are classified as relating to I., Learning; II., Enterprise; III., Pursuits; IV., Nurture; V., Habits; VI., Discourse; VII., Creeds; VIII., Interleaves. The second part, or "Book II." includes suggestions on I., Method; II., Genesis; III., Person; IV., Lapse; V., Immortality.

We purposely call his treatment of the themes "suggestions," because it is of the nature of "Table-Talk" to consist of suggestions rather than to be full and exhaustive; desultory rather than systematic. There is however this great difference between the table-talk of Mr. Alcott and the other table-talks

so named: While the latter relate to themes of gossip, social or literary, or at best contain flashes of humor and critical insight, Mr. Alcott's table-talk relates to things *sub specie æternitatis* and is such as Tantalus might have heard at Olympian tables. In fact, as we look over the topics we see that the mystic philosopher has figured himself as sitting at a table of books and as conversing with the wits of all time—or rather as listening to their conversation and assisting in it himself.

Young people of enterprise often sit down with a famous book in their hands to try and discover what rare quality it is which has recommended the book to wise and great men. Their efforts are very disheartening. The book is dull, its topics seem remote from all present interest. Why should any one now be interested in such remarks and upon such themes? And yet the verdict of the great thinkers is that that very book is superlatively excellent. Is it written, then, in cypher, so that only the few initiated souls understand it?

To the inquisitive youth who desires to solve the problems of life and wishes above all to know what this secret thing called wisdom is—such a book as Mr. Alcott's is a timely gift. Let him sit down and listen to the table-talk and to the comments of Mr. Alcott, who is one of the peers, and talks from as high a level as any one of the bidden guests.

And who are the guests that sit at Mr. Alcott's table? They are not the "standard authors" found on the shelf in every cottage. But their list forms a part of the choice collection which Time has selected and indexed and which he keeps carefully dusted. They are Pythagoras, Plato, Proclus, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius, Krishna Dwaipayana (author of the *Bhagavad Gita*), Simonides, Cicero, Hermes Trismegistus, St. Augustine, Montaigne, Ficinus, Van Felmont, Erasmus, Dante, Glanvil, Novalis, Shaftesbury, Herbert, Dryden, Bacon, Henry More, Leighton, Cudworth, Jacobi, Bœhme, Oersted, Milton, Law, Evelyn, Kant, Richter, Wordsworth, Thoreau, Agassiz, Coleridge, Berkeley, Carlyle, Emerson, and a great company of equally rare spirits. At this table the youth may taste of the Seer's Rations—the ambrosial food upon which poets are fed. Mr. Alcott has described this diet in the following quaint poem:

[The Poet or Seer]

"Takes sunbeams, Spring waters,
Earth's juices, meads' creams,
Bathes in floods of sweet ethers,
Comes baptized from the streams;
Guest of Him, the sweet-lipped,
The dreamer's quaint dreams.
Mingles morals idyllic
With Samian fable.
Sage seasoned from cruets
Of Plutarch's chaste table.
Pledges Zeus, Zoroaster,
Tastes Cana's glad cheer,
Suns, globes, on his trencher,
The elements there.
Bowls of sunrise for breakfast
Brimful of the East,
Foaming flagons of frolic

Sovereign solids of nature
 Solar seeds of the sphere,
 His evening's gay feast.
 Olympian viand
 Surprising as rare.
 Thus baiting his genius,
 His wonderful word
 Brings poets and sibyls
 To sup at his board.
 Feeds thus and thus fares he,
 Speeds thus and thus cares he,
 Thus faces and graces
 Life's long euthanasias
 His gifts unabated,
 Transfigured, translated—
 The idealist prudent,
 Saint, poet, priest, student,
 Philosopher, he."

This diet, which is so inspiring to poets, is found to be so dull and uninteresting by the ordinary reader as to exasperate him and cause him to express his disappointment in unmeasured terms.

Doubtless, in this realm of literature each one may choose for himself his own table. If not pleased with his viands he can easily take others. Still for the youth who desires to make thorough work, and correctly estimate the utterances of the men who have borne so great a reputation for wisdom, it is not quite sufficient to read the label "*Ueberwundene Standpunkt*" and pass by on the other side. What is this standpoint which once had validity and is now outgrown? Are our literary critics as wise in their day and generation as the scientists with whom they affect to affiliate? Do they take lessons of Darwin and of the Darwinians in Ethnology, Philology and Civil History? Is not this *historical method* the true scientific method as expounded by Hæckel and Huxley and Tyndall? Its method is valid not only in the study of plants and the lower animals; in the evolution of human civilization from savagery; of language from inarticulate cries, but also of ideas and the primordial archetypes of principles upon which have been built the institutions, creeds, and literary conventionalisms of the world.

If a young man aspires to be a scientific man, and to understand his theme, he does not hesitate to study with the utmost diligence and affectionate interest the accessories and their historical catenation. There are too many young men who set up for literary critics without feeling the same broad scientific interest in literature and its accessories. They are not the botanist but the gardener's hired man, who cares not a fig for any plant except his beets and cabbages. Anything else—be it a *Victoria Regia* that has sprouted accidentally between the cabbages, is only a pestilent weed, and is at once to be pruned with the hoe. Such rough work is necessary in the market gardens in order that we may have our salad at the noonday meal, but such work in the literary garden has no good purpose at all. It spreads a narrow literary bigotry which is conceited enough to believe that the true canon of criticism is its own individual taste: "That is good because I like it." The prevailing literary fashion is set up as the true standard of nature.

Hence it comes to pass that with equal reason one condemns the application of the historical method to plants, animals and nature-processes by Darwin, Tyndall, and Agassiz on the one hand, and the same application by a writer on philosophy and mysticism on the other. There are self-styled philosophic writers who never lose an opportunity to sneer at scholasticism as if the scholastics were all a set of fanatics (*gens ratione ferox*). The mystics who succeeded the scholastics are treated worse by the same modern authorities.

Apparently they suppose that the nineteenth century has been possible without the ninth century—that our civilization and its appurtenances has not grown out of the past at all. They do not know that the Christian theology was wrought out by the scholastics, and that nothing of it would exist now if it had not been for those four earnest centuries of thought and debate on the nature of the soul and on the objectivity of thought. They do not know that the insights which lie at the bottom of all our modern literature and render it the powerful instrumentality that it now is, trace their source to the mystics of the later middle ages, and have been drawn up out of the fountains of their deep minds. Without those insights literature would serve no better purpose than the bells that jingle on the garments of a clown.

“But this nineteenth century exists; our literature exists; scholasticism and mysticism are things of the past; what more do we want of them?”—Animals may exist without self-knowledge, but not as *men*. Self-knowledge is essential to man. He needs to understand himself as well as to be.

One of the important functions of literature, it is true, is the amusement of society. But amusement is not to be considered its only function nor its highest function. Art is the revelation of Reason in forms appreciable by sense-perception. Seeing and hearing enable us to enjoy music and the plastic arts. Imagination is the *sensus communis* through which the soul may realize any one of its sense-perceptions in a free manner by its own activity. It is to the imagination chiefly that literature appeals for its sensuous effect. It does not reach the senses directly, but only the higher and reflected form of the sensory—the reproductive imagination—and this form is adapted to a higher art than music or the plastic arts. It is a purer manifestation of Reason.

The rational content of a work of art is to be sought in the mode and manner in which it portrays human life; for all art must portray human life directly or indirectly. Even the picture of a landscape or a Greek temple does this indirectly; suggesting by symbolism a correspondence (spiritual metonymy) human wants and aspirations and human adaptation and uses.

Portrayal of human life is the basis of all that contributes to his amusement or diversion. The grand fact of human life is self-consciousness. It begins in self-symbolizing, and Aristotle defines man as the mimetic or symbol-making animal. Amusement has always this content of self-portrayal. It is the spectacle of one's strength, endurance, fortitude, weakness and wickedness, gracefulness, daring, cunning, policy, wisdom, &c. The spectacle is that of one's self or of his race. Even a dog-fight interests through sympathy. The rough man personifies, as it were, the canine duelists, and glories in their exhibition of qualities that he prizes as human.

Amusement is the crudest form of this human activity of self-portrayal, and it ascends in a continuous scale towards perfect self-consciousness in pure thought or absolute science. What Plato calls in the “Republic” the Dialectic

Method—what Aristotle calls the theorizing activity (the Vision of Self-Activity) or the knowing of knowing (*νόησις νοήσεως*). Through all its degrees it is human pleasure and human profit or culture. The finite, temporary, transient side of it is happiness or pleasure—the substantial, essential, eternal good of it is culture—the elevation of the soul into consciousness of its divine archetype—consciousness of its pure activity as Image of the personal God who creates in order that his creation may result in conscious communion with his creatures.

This high final cause of human culture being the rational purpose of all art and especially of literature, the semi-religious, semi-literary, semi-philosophic forms of it, such as we find in the writings of the mystics, ought to possess great interest for the literary critic. Who can be called a competent critic of the literature of to-day, if he knows nothing of the genesis of the humanitarianism which inspires the prolific creation of the novel? Of course he cannot map out nor explain its course, knowing nothing of its far-off origin, and nothing of its inevitable progress to the sea. Its changes on the way are not to be explained by him. He will treat them as good or bad things just as they happen to strike his individual likes and dislikes, and their significance will be unknown to him. But the critic who studies the interaction of Christian and Moslem thought (of Oriental Monistic Pantheism with Occidental Trinitarian Personal Theism) and sees the clear thought reached by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas embodied by Meister Eckhart in a mysticism which could be preached to the common people and made the daily food of the soul in the writings of Tauler, Thomas à Kempis, and their followers throughout Christendom, can discover the transformation of the idea of purgatory as held by the Church in the middle ages, into an inward and more spiritual doctrine. For purgatory is the Catholic form of the Protestant humanitarianism which is the burden of our later and latest history—our democratic institutions, our great charters, constitutions, house of commons, universal suffrage, anti-slavery wars, our common schools, &c., &c. It is the spirit that guides the pen of our Dickens and Thackerays. It believes practically that life is for growth and culture. Philanthropy wishes therefore to realize the rational possibilities that exist in the lowest and most degraded that wear the human form.

But whither does this all lead, and what direction will it take or *should* it take? Of this we can learn by studying its purpose or final cause as revealed in its origin and its past course—but not by merely trying its taste on our literary palate. What amuses us or delights us is well enough for our diversion and possibly for our culture, but the immediate sensation is not at all adequate as the foundation of critical canons.

With this in view it is to be regretted that some high literary authorities have chosen to ignore the rare merit of the books which Mr. Alcott has given us. His "Tablets" and "Concord Days" (noticed in this journal July, 1868, and Oct., 1872) together with this volume of "Table-Talk" are invaluable to all who wish to reach the standpoint of the true critic or to see the field of literature in its true perspective. To Mr. Alcott the atmosphere and mode of thought of those earlier stages of literature are congenial—they are not an *Ueberwundene Standpunkt* to him. To us who wish to study them and revitalize their forms, no other help can be so valuable as the help of one who lives in them and thinks with them.